

# NUTRITION

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## **Keep Your Heart Healthy and Control Cholesterol with Food First**

Your diet is an important factor in controlling cholesterol. A healthful low-fat eating plan, combined with regular physical activity, is key to heart health. In fact, new National Cholesterol Education Program guidelines recommend that one in three Americans need to make diet changes to lower their risk for heart disease. Foods high in soluble fiber, like oatmeal, beans and peas, barley and many fruits and vegetables (such as apples, oranges, and carrots) are now recommended to help lower cholesterol levels.

### **Get to Know Cholesterol – The Good and the Bad**

The “bad” LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol is like a one-way bus. It carries cholesterol from the liver (where cholesterol is made and recycled) and deposits it in the arteries where it can cause blockage that leads to heart disease. The “good” HDL (high density lipoprotein) cholesterol is like a second one-way bus. It picks up cholesterol from the arteries and brings it back to the liver so the cholesterol does not harm arteries.

The less LDL you have and the more HDL cholesterol you have, the lower your risk for heart disease. The best way to increase your HDL blood cholesterol is to stay active and trim away excess pounds if you are not already at a healthy body weight. When it comes to LDL, the “bad” cholesterol, your food choices are key. A heart-healthy eating pattern - a diet that’s high in soluble fiber with moderate amounts of fat and cholesterol - can make a difference and can help reduce LDL levels. To lower LDL, try eating more foods high in soluble fiber. Studies have shown that oatmeal helps to lower LDL cholesterol, without lowering HDL.

### **Quick Ways to Fit Fiber In**

1. Eat foods from all five food groups. Eating a variety of foods within each food group will provide you the essential nutrients needed for a healthy diet.
2. Remember to eat breakfast. Breakfast is the ideal time to enjoy fiber-rich foods and fuel your body for the day ahead. Enjoy oatmeal and other whole-grain cereals.
3. Eat high fiber snacks. Reach for high fiber snacks like fresh fruits, raw vegetables or nuts. Eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day to increase your fiber intake.



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